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## STAND Annual Meeting Set

Once again, it is time for STAND's annual meeting. It is scheduled for October 30th, from 5-8PM, at West Texas RX Garden Cafe, 3211 S. Coulter St. There is great camaraderie at the annual meeting. Many people who can not come to meetings throughout the year come to this meeting. Here is your chance to come out and

show your support. Fresh ideas are Specially Welcome!

The meeting will begin with election of officers and Board Members, followed by presentation of the "Beverly E. C. Gattis Community Service Award", refreshments, and a speaker.

## Pantex clean-up progressing

The investigation phase of environmental cleanup at Pantex has been "conditionally approved" by regulators. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—the two regulatory agencies with various responsibilities to accept or reject the work by Pantex—are in agreement on the decision.

Unfortunately, the importance of "conditional" approval was not made clear at the September 15<sup>th</sup> public meeting. The TCEQ handout stated: "The condition of approval is an uncertainty management program."

Regulators revealed more about "uncertainties" in a meeting earlier this year with STAND, Peace Farm and PANAL. In short, there are some significant information gaps in the environmental investigation—especially about groundwater—but the existing array of equipment and wells at Pantex cannot tell us much more.

Rather than spending large sums of money on more investigation via new equipment and wells, they are choosing to approve the closure of the investigation phase with the "condition" that a long-term monitoring program will be put in place. As the long-term monitoring system reveals more groundwater information, regulators may require additional work to be performed.

### Regulatory Conclusions

\* The Perched Aquifer under Pantex is recharged via playas. \* Evaporation minimizes the amount of recharge that could take place in upland areas which do not hold water. \* The Fine Grain Zone (the dense layer that underlies and holds water in the Perched Aquifer) is not consistently continuous under Pantex. Toward the south-east portion of Pantex the Zone changes enough that it no longer holds water in that area. \* The Perched Aquifer beneath Pantex is generally a product of Pantex's historic wastewater discharges to Playa 1. \* Contaminants in the form of vapor in the soil are a significant source of con-

*THE VISION*  
*The Panhandle is our home;*  
*the world is our neighbor.*  
*STAND is committed to building a*  
*sustainable future,*  
*conserving the natural resources*  
*entrusted to our care,*  
*and protecting life, community,*  
*and democracy.*

tamination of soils and a potential source of additional contamination of the Perched Aquifer in the future. Migration of contaminants through the Perched Aquifer's Fine Grain Zone will impact the Ogallala Aquifer's water quality. \* The Ogallala Aquifer already has low levels of contaminants (less than health based levels) which are detected occasionally and currently do not establish a groundwater contaminant plume that requires remediation, but TCEQ clearly states that the Ogallala Aquifer has been impacted.

- Beverly Gattis

Technical Assistance Grants from the EPA make it possible for STAND to hire scientists to review DOE/Pantex reports. **For copies** of their reviews or TCEQ memoranda, contact STAND office .

## Congress Debates Nuclear Weapons Spending Policy

A debate is shaping up in Congress about the direction and funding of the U.S. nuclear weapons program. It's a quiet debate so far, but both sides are pretty well dug in. It involves billions of dollars – and the nature of Pantex's mission both in the short and the long run. There hasn't been anything quite like it since the immediate aftermath of the Cold War.

Oddly enough, the debate is being led by Republicans on both sides – Representative Hobson of Ohio, Chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Energy and Water Development, and Senator Domenici, his Senate counterpart.

By way of background, Pantex's mission is to assemble, maintain, upgrade, and disassemble all U.S. nuclear warheads and bombs, of which there are about 10,300. In addition, Pantex stores at least 12,000 plutonium warhead cores or "pits" in its Zone 4 and Zone 12 bunkers, along with some nuclear weapons.

These weapons and materials obviously must be protected at all costs from any attack as well as from mishaps and sabotage. Not all the issues involved can be easily or cheaply remedied. These considerations are driving up security costs not just at Pantex but around the nuclear weapons complex with no clear end in site, a fact that is not being lost on the House Appropriations Committee.

Pantex's budget this year, including the local site office of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), is \$526 million. The President's budget request for Pantex for the coming fiscal year is \$459 million, about 13% less.

For the last few years most of Pantex's work has been maintenance and upgrades to weapons under the so-called "life extension programs" or LEPs. Much more than mere maintenance is involved, as the military characteristics of weapons are also being improved." As a sideline, Pantex sometimes dismantles obsolete weapons as scheduling allows, but there has been little progress on dismantlement. Since the LEPs have experienced schedule delays and cost overruns, dismantlement has become the poor stepchild at Pantex.

Representative Hobson, in a tentative spending plan now approved by the whole House (but not yet the Senate) wants to change that – and a lot else besides.

The Administration requested \$35.2 million for dismantlement, some fraction of which would be spent at Pantex. The House of Representatives, following Hobson's subcommittee's lead, wants to spend a whopping \$110.2 million on dismantlement next year, and House lawmakers also want a real plan for reductions, not just the current whenever-we-get-

around-to-it non-plan. Further, these Republicans want, as they put it, a "dramatically smaller nuclear stockpile in the near future." Domenici's committee, by contrast, would drop dismantlement funds to just \$15 million, less than half the Administration's request, and a fair indication of the big policy differences between the Senate and House.

The new dismantlement money in the House version would come from certain LEPs and from a number of NNSA "problem programs," resulting in plenty of money for dismantlement – and a huge net savings of \$449 million overall, about 7% of the whole \$6.6 billion nuclear weapons budget.

The House is especially focusing its concern on the giant, unaccountable and seemingly-unending "science" and "engineering" projects at the weapons labs in New Mexico and California. Hobson calls the biggest of these little more than "welfare" for scientists and engineers – Cold War relics with no payback for the country despite billions in recent spending.

As you might expect, this agenda has captured the attention of Senator Domenici, whose state is home to over \$4 billion in DOE spending, much of it in categories Hobson would trim. In preparation for battle, Domenici has taken hostage Lawrence Livermore lab's biggest project, saying quite bluntly that if nuclear weapons science is to be cut, let's start in California.

Hobson wants a much smaller nuclear arsenal and he wants much better management. He also wants better security – now. He would pump up the Administration's security request of \$740 million by \$85 million next year, but in the long run he and the Secretary of Energy's advisors see little alternative to consolidating the nation's nuclear materials in a single site, one with a bigger buffer zone against intrusion than is available at Pantex.

Perhaps the biggest political powers in this contest aren't representatives or senators, Democrats or republicans. Their names are Katrina and Rita. Domenici's and Hobson's subcommittees are called "energy and water" – the "water" refers to harbors and flood control, as in New Orleans. Such projects compete directly with nuclear weapons each year within a given budget ceiling. Katrina and Rita were very costly visitors, and not all their bills have been posted on our national accounts. Hobson's conservative vision of a much smaller, more safely stored, and less costly nuclear arsenal may find increasing favor now, after the floods.

The content of this year's final spending bill will be decided this Fall in a closed conference of the two subcommittees. Nothing big will be decided fast. Next year, the same issues will be back, but the fiscal problems these subcommittees face will have grown.

- Greg Mello, Los Alamos Study Group

## National Parks Issues coming to Head

Here's a bizarre thought: If we don't drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, we have to sell off national parks to help balance the national budget. That grotesque notion has slithered full-grown from the dim recesses of Rep. Richard Pombo's brain. The Tracy Republican is chairman of the House Resources Committee, the most important House committee on public lands issues.

The whirring sound you hear is Theodore Roosevelt, the founder of our national parks and national wildlife refuge system and a Republican of a different sort, spinning in his grave.

Pombo drafted a 285-page bill dated Sept. 9 that would open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Outer Continental Shelf off America's 26 coastal states to drilling (something opposed by most officials in both parties in California). His bill calls for selling off national parks; selling naming rights to visitor centers, education centers, museums, trails and amphitheaters; and selling \$10 million in advertising in maps and guides and on all buses, shuttles, vans, trams and ferries. According to news accounts, Pombo's spokesman said the proposal is intended only to influence lawmakers to support the item allowing oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. That proposal by itself is bad enough. Americans use 7 billion barrels of oil per year. The US Geological Survey estimates the refuge has 4.3 to 11.8 billion barrels of technically recoverable oil (or a mean of 7.7 billion barrels). Economically recoverable oil is less.

Why drill in one of the nation's most pristine wildernesses in order to get a year's or less supply of oil, distracting us from where we need to go with energy policy? But that's not the issue of the moment. Pombo's bill requires 15 sites to be removed from the national park system and made available "for sale or for energy or commercial devel-

opment." One of them is the Eugene O'Neill National Historical Site in Danville. Across the country, there's Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument, Texas; Fort Bowie National Historical Site, Arizona; Frederick Law Olmsted National Historical Site, Massachusetts; Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, District of Columbia; Minuteman Missile National Historic Site, South Dakota; Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial, Pennsylvania; Thomas Stone National Historical Site, Maryland. The list includes seven sites in Alaska: Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve; Bering Land Bridge National Preserve; Cape Krusenstern National Monument; Kobuk Valley National Park; Lake Clark National Park and Preserve; Noatak National Preserve; and Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. Oh, and there's this little gem: Pombo's bill would instruct the secretary of the interior to remove Theodore Roosevelt Island from the national park system and "make it available for immediate sale for purposes of commercial and residential development", adding insult to injury.

Pombo would drill and sell our assets to gain one-time money in order to fix a budget hole. And when the deficits continue next year and the year after? How many parks and how much public land does Pombo intend to despoil or sell? The good news is that a Sept. 25 draft of the bill removed the national park sell-off. Still, the idea is out there and will probably rear its slimy head again. Pombo has shown that he's willing to sacrifice our public lands rather than be a steward of them. No Republican leader has risen to denounce the idea, so it seems safe to assume that he is not the only member of his party who finds this appalling notion acceptable. Are there contemporary Teddy Roosevelt Republicans out there somewhere? The nation could sure use their services these days.

-- Trish Williams-Mello, Los Alamos Study Group

***Time to pay Annual Membership dues! Join STAND and Donate. Fill in and return this form to the STAND office, address on back.***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

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I have enclosed my contribution to STAND for: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Membership Dues (\$20/person or \$10/student, part-time worker, or senior) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Additional Tax Deductible Contribution for STAND work

I would like to serve on the following committees:



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Pantex Quarterly Groundwater Meeting- December 5th - 4PM  
Panhandle Plains Museum - Agenda Available at STAND office or e-mail

NEXT LERWPG MEETING: 10:00 a.m., October 13, 2005,  
High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1 office, 2930 Avenue Q, Lubbock, TX

Watch <http://www.llanoplan.org/minutes.htm> for record of the public hearing for the Region O water plan

Contacts: Senator Kel Seliger, District 31: P.O. Box 12068, Capital Station, Austin, TX 78711  
(806)374-8994 or (512)463-0131, <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/>

Keep up with Texas Legislature at <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us>

Check out [www.amarillorecycles.com](http://www.amarillorecycles.com)

For Round II Initially Prepared Plan, Updated Presentations and Minutes for the  
Panhandle Water Planning Group watch <http://www.panhandlewater.org/>

Panhandle Plains Historical Museum recognizes 40 years of Lake Meredith in the Panhandle with an exhibit  
"A River Runs Through It". Additionally the museum will offer a symposium "Whiskey is for Drinking, and  
Water is for Fighting Over", November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The symposium will offer a dozen speakers and hopes to  
explore water rights, land management and public access issues.  
Contact the museum for times and speakers.

*Stand is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit grassroots group dedicated to citizen responsibility for the care of our  
natural resources, to government that is accountable to the community, and to a forum for public debate in  
which solutions might be found... for our communities.*